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Europe

Together against the Bolkestein directive

- News from around the world -

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On February 14th the proposed Bolkestein directive, barely amended at all, comes up in the European Parliament for its first reading. The European Trade Union Confederation is calling for a major demonstration in Strasbourg. The European Sections of the Fourth International have issued the following statement.

On February 14th the proposed Bolkestein directive, barely amended at all, comes up in the European Parliament for its first reading. This debate is a full-fledged provocation of the peoples of Europe. A majority of Europeans has rejected this proposal, through their trade union organisations or their votes against the European constitution in France and the Netherlands. The rejection was so forceful that Jacques Chirac promised that the directive would go straight into the dustbin.

Demolishing Social Gains

This is a proposal to organise social dumping and encourage competition among peoples. It transforms public services and wage earners into commodities. It symbolises the capitalist Europe that we reject, which is being built on the basis of the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties. It is part of an across-the-board offensive by the bosses and European governments of the right and left against the world of labour. In the context of neoliberal globalisation and intensified competition, the European bourgeoisie has set out to demolish the main social gains Europeans had made and our right to work. Privatisations are multiplying everywhere in the public sector in Europe. Social plans are accompanied by policies of casualisation and flexibilisation, undermining unemployment, health and pension benefits. In order to push these policies through, a repressive arsenal is being assembled everywhere, aimed at criminalising actions by workers, young people and immigrants.

Organise a United, European Response

Only a mobilisation of the world of labour coordinated on a European scale can beat back this offensive. Withdrawal of the Bolkestein directive, pure and simple, can be a unifying demand, so as to win and give new hope to the social movements.

Faced with the bosses' offensive, embryonic resistance networks are taking shape, notably through the organisation of European Social Forums like those in Florence, Paris, London and soon Athens. Resistance movements have been organised in many countries to the point of general strikes, in Italy, the Netherlands, Greece, Belgium and France. But they have been defeated everywhere. Isolated strikes are not enough today to make the bosses, who are more and more demanding, retreat.

Build a Political Alternative

One of the obstacles to the growth of social movements is the lack of a credible political expression for their mobilisations. When in power, social democracy, the Greens and the CPs have accepted the dictates of neoliberalism. As a result, European workers have been tossed back and forth in a false choice between the hard

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right and the soft left. The bourgeoisie no longer even gives the social democrats crumbs to pay for reforms, and has driven them to transform themselves into social-liberals, often with the Greens in tow. But there are millions of people in the trade union, political and grassroots left wings who no longer accept this backsliding. They are trying to build new forces that are ready to break with the laws of capitalism and rely on social mobilisation in order to respond to the demands of all the social layers that are suffering from the bosses' offensive.

A different society is possible: one that would distribute wealth differently, so as to safeguard our jobs, our cultures, our health and our environment; a society in which the people would decide what would be produced and how, and would be constantly vigilant so as to ensure that its will is carried out.

This is the unitary, anti-capitalist struggle that the militants of the Fourth International are waging in Europe.

Bandiera Rossa - Italy, Espacio Alternativo - Spanish State, Erre - Italy, ISG - Britain, ISL - Germany, LCR - France, OKDE - Greece, PSR - Portugal, Revolta Global - Catalonia, RSB - Germany, SAP - Denmark, SAP - Netherlands, SAP/POS - Belgium, Socialist Democracy - Ireland, SP - Sweden